

KEATING AND CUBA

This is potentially one of the most important issues of the campaign. It offers an opportunity to dramatize the clear differences in outlook and stature between the two candidates. It could contribute significantly to swinging the liberal-intellectual vote to Kennedy. And finally, the record should be set straight--to do so is a public service.

Keating owes his national reputation as a Senator whose voice is to be listened to with respect on Cuban and foreign affairs almost entirely to his words and actions in this affair. In many voters' minds, this one issue constitutes the strongest reason for his re-election--see the Times profile of him when he announced his candidacy.

This issue concerns not the accuracy of Keating's pronouncements (though upon occasion they were inaccurate), but rather the propriety and wisdom of those pronouncements. The issue is not Cuba, but Keating.

Basically, the argument is that these pronouncements produced no concrete, specific benefit to the country, and that in fact they were a disservice to the country because they encouraged irresponsibility in other politicians, a crisis of confidence in the United States intelligence community and in the government itself, forced discussion in public of matters which it is in the national interest to keep under cover, and thus made the execution of foreign policy more difficult for the President.

An inflammable side-issue is that Keating deceived the public into believing that he was privy to government intelligence and other sources of intelligence--while in fact all or almost all of his information came from previously published reports, culled from newspapers and magazines and other channels which were available to him in the government. This charge, made with some documentation by Evans and Novak of the Herald Tribune, has not been denied by Keating. It needs further checking before it can prudently be injected into the campaign. It is, however, promising.

Senator Keating's public disclosures of intelligence concerning the Soviet buildup and withdrawal in Cuba reflect impulsiveness and a considerable lack of wisdom in the ways of domestic politics and foreign affairs.

On October 10 Keating announced that the Soviets were introducing offensive weapons into Cuba, including 5,000 military personnel and launching sites for six IRBM's. The Administration had already ordered intelligence flights to look into the matter, and when these proved positive, the country was faced with a crisis demanding the most sophisticated and delicate decisions and maneuvers. Above all, secrecy was imperative--concerning not only our preparations for response but even our knowledge that the sudden change in Soviet policy had occurred. The Soviet strategy depended upon surprise; they were doing their utmost to work under cover. The same was demanded of our government. Now in any similar situation, three basic procedures are necessary: first, a decision as to our response has to be made; second, complicated preparations must be executed in order for the decision to be implemented; third, our Allies have to be apprised of our situation and intentions, and their support secured. For all of this, secrecy is necessary, not only to obtain the advantage of surprise, but also domestically, so that a sound decision may be reached on the merits of the situation alone, without interference from popular pressures in various directions. The command decision must be statesmanlike, not political. There is no evidence that Senator Keating considered any of these complexities. He did not check first with the highest sources in the Government to find out whether they knew what the Soviets were doing. He did not make any private effort to influence any immediate policies of the Government on the situation with which he might have disagreed. He did not ask The Secretaries of Defense or State, or even the President, for their clearance of this explosive information--in fact, there is no evidence that he consulted any high official as to whether his precipitous action would be in the national interest. He should have. A statesman would have. He would have understood the importance of his information and the situation, and without thought of any other consideration than the nation's best interests, have gone to work for a responsible resolution of the crisis.

When the immediate crisis was over, and the Soviet agreement to withdraw had been obtained, the nation found itself with a new Cuba expert on its hands. Keating's information had turned out to be close enough to the truth to establish him as an authority on developments in Cuba. There was widespread speculation and whispering about his unidentified sources, and from time to time he would go on television or to the Senate floor to announce more information. Then in a Senate speech on January 31, 1963, he announced to the nation that the concrete ICBM sites had not been dismantled, and that missiles could still be in caves, and prepared for firing in a matter of hours. A few days later he announced that the Soviets had not withdrawn any troops--that although the Administration claimed that 5,000 had left the island, it was a fact that 5,000 had arrived to take their places. This information brought immediate results: other allegations were forthcoming by other politicians, the public howled with disapproval of the Administration's gullibility in the Russians and demanded to know why facts had not come forward into the light. Secretary McNamara, in response, went on nationwide television in an unprecedented exposure of our country's intelligence on a foreign situation. He proved that the bases had been dismantled and that there was no evidence to support Keating's contentions regarding the Soviet military personnel. So an unseemly controversy arose over who was telling the truth--the President or this Senator. The United States Government had publicized the evidence upon which its contentions rested; Senator Keating supplied no documentation whatever for his statements. Nor did the public compel him to, as it should have. Others, seeing one man get away with it, followed his example. Representative Donald C. Bruce of Indiana, claimed that there were "40 big missiles" still in Cuban caves and that he wouldn't be convinced by anything McNamara told him to the contrary.

Now Senator Keating repeatedly insisted that he was being responsible, prudent and constructive. But would a responsible, prudent, and constructive man have opened this Pandora's box? What possible good could it serve? If the Soviets were being perfidious, another crisis, which everyone agreed would be more serious than the last, would result. Keating claimed that "if Khrushchev withdraws his troops, it will be because of vocal

American objections and outrage, not in spite of it. Khrushchev retreats only when he feels the pressure on him is becoming intolerable. A determined American Nation, vocal in its criticism of Soviet imperialism, and strong in its pressure for action, has always carried more weight with Khrushchev than diplomatic note-passing." This methodology in the practice of foreign policy was distinctly at variance with the strategy of the Administration. President Kennedy had always borne in mind the necessity of making Soviet retreat unembarrassing. This, in fact, was the tactic which had been successful in the October crisis. Keating's hard-line, pushy approach to dealing with the Russians was a new departure in this continuing crisis. If he had been a statesman, or a responsible leader of America, he would not have taken upon his own shoulders the decision to switch tactics. Particularly when there was some room for doubt that ~~the Soviets~~ the Soviets were re-introducing troops into Cuba, in violation of previous agreements.

Public opinion, in a free society, is a powerful political weapon. It must be resorted to only with the greatest care and respect. Political theorists from Plato on down modern times have always acknowledged the necessity of protective institutions which would prevent misgovernment through improper ^{public} pressure. ~~the public~~. In our own system we have many safeguards, particularly in the realm of foreign policy. Foreign policy is to be conducted by the Executive branch under the President, not by the Congress. While the advice and consent of the Senate is constitutionally required for all treaties with foreign powers, and while no responsible President would conduct major foreign policy without first securing the support of Congressional leaders, nevertheless the tactics of day-to-day foreign policy are wholly within the jurisdiction of the President. Such policy operates on the basis of evidence about the situations with which it deals--evidence carefully, and occasionally, when necessary, clandestinely secured and verified. When one man, no matter who he is, stands up to challenge the truth of that information; when this man offers no evidence to support his challenge; when he then arouses public opinion in his favor and in opposition to or distrust in their common government; and when that public opinion can be quickly and easily mobilized

policy

and when this aroused public opinion ~~change~~ seeks to influence foreign
as is possible ~~today~~ with our mass communications media; when all this happens, then
constitutional
~~responsible~~ democracy has ceased to exist. And the man who whistled up the hurricane
is responsible, and should be called to account. And That is what happened with Keating
and Guba.